

Biodiversity Net Gain Report

Land Rear of 234 Conquest Close, Hitchin SG4 9DP

For TEG Properties Ltd

January 2025



Report: SE2578.2

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Limitations of the Report

These are set out in the accompanying EcIA (SE2578.1).

Related Documents List

SE2578.1 PEA Conquest Close Hitchin Jan 2026 f (Preliminary Ecological Appraisal)

SE2578.2 BNG Report Conquest Close Hitchin Jan 2026 f (this Biodiversity Net Gain report)

SE2578.3 BNG Metric Conquest Close Hitchin Jan 2026 f (Metric spreadsheet)

SE2578.4 BNG HCA Conquest Close Hitchin Jan 2026 f (Habitat Condition Assessment)

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sound Ecology has compiled this report on behalf of TEG Properties Ltd. It pertains to the redevelopment of land to the rear of 234 Conquest Close, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 9DP.

The report comprises the findings of a Biodiversity Net Gain report. It provides all the information required for a Biodiversity Network Gain Plan. The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool has been used to establish baseline and post-development biodiversity units.

Baseline Habitats - The baseline survey was conducted on November 25, 2025. The 0.146 ha site is located in a residential area of Hitchin, as described in the accompanying Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Report SE2577.1). Baseline habitats are shown in Appendix A1.

Proposed Habitats - The proposal involves the development of two detached bungalows, gardens, and parking (Appendix A2). The calculation of proposed habitat factors includes vegetated gardens, a small area of communal landscape set as a flowering lawn with native boundary hedges, and a small number of native trees.

Biodiversity Net Gain Results – Due to the loss of established self-set trees, the metric shows a 39% loss of habitat, equating to 0.95 units. While hedgerow units delivered a 70% gain, the trading rules for habitat units were not met: 0.95 medium distinctiveness habitats were lost. This is not surprising given the long-term neglect of the site, which allowed vegetated habitats to develop.

This assessment indicates that the development proposal will require 1.19 units to achieve a 10% gain (Table 1). The required minimum 10% gain will be achieved through the purchase of off-site credit, as there is no opportunity within the scheme to deliver biodiversity net gain.

Table 1 - Summary of Change in Biodiversity Units:

Category	Unit type	Units	Change
On-site net % change	Habitat Units	-0.95	-39.29 %
	Hedgerow Units	0.10	70.28 %
Trading Rules Satisfied			No
Unit Deficit			1.19

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Introduction and Objectives

Sound Ecology has compiled this report on behalf of TEG Properties Ltd. It pertains to the redevelopment of land to the rear of 234 Conquest Close, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 9DP.

The 1.46 ha site is described in the accompanying Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (SE2578.1). The report summarises the results from a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment. The baseline habitat was assessed during a site walkover in November 2025.

The Stautuory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool v.1.0.4 (DEFRA, 2025) has been used to establish baseline and post-development biodiversity units. The area figures used in this report have been derived from the baseline and post-development habitat drawings provided in the Appendices. Accompanying BNG documents are listed on page 2.

2.3 Policy and Legislation

The requirement that developments seek to achieve a net gain in biodiversity arises from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024), which states in Para. 187 that "Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by... minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity..."

In England, BNG is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021. Developers must deliver a BNG of 10%, meaning redevelopment will result in more or better-quality natural habitats than existed previously.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Desk Study and Field Survey Methods

A habitat survey was conducted in accordance with the CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CIEEM, 2017) and using the UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) version 2.0 (UKHab Ltd., 2023). Appendix A1 reproduces the baseline map, which represents the site condition prior to development, and Appendix A2 displays the post-development site layout, based on the architect's drawing.

Andrew Palmer BSc (Hons), DipLA, MCIEEM, conducted the baseline condition survey. Habitat types, areas, distinctiveness, and condition were established based on experience, judgement, and knowledge of plant communities. Areas were mapped using field measurements transferred to an Ordnance Survey base and into AutoCAD. The client provided the ownership boundary. Measurements are accurate to +/- 1 metre.

3.2 Approach to BNG

This report uses the CIEEM template (CIEEM 2021, Biodiversity Net Gain Report and Audit Templates, Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester, UK).

The BNG assessment has been approached in accordance with the principles outlined in BS 8683:2021, the Process for Designing and Implementing Biodiversity Net Gain. While the site meets the requirements for the Small Site Metric, the full Stautuory Metric Calculation Tool (DEFRA, 2024) was used as there are priority habitats and designated sites within 500 m of the redline boundary.

3.3 Suitably Qualified Ecologist

The survey was conducted by Sarah Downing (SD), an experienced ecologist who meets the requirements of a Suitably Qualified Ecologist (SQE) as outlined in BS 42020:2013. SD is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. SD holds level-1 bat, Hazel Dormouse and a Great Crested Newt survey licences (Class Licences: 2022-10367, 2016-20813 and 2015-177251, respectively).

The report's author, Andrew Palmer (AP) BSc (Hons), DipLA, MCIEEM, also meets the requirements set out in BS 42020:2013 for a Suitably Qualified Ecologist (SQE). BS42020:2013 defines a suitably qualified ecologist as someone who: Holds a degree (or equivalent qualification) in an ecology-related field; has been a practising ecologist with a minimum of three years of relevant experience within the last five years; clearly demonstrates a practical understanding of factors affecting ecology in relation to construction and the built environment, including acting in an advisory capacity to provide recommendations for ecological protection, enhancement and mitigation measures; is bound by a professional code of conduct; is subject to peer review; and is not acting or advising outside their professional competencies.

3.4 Limitations

There were no limitations present during the survey or subsequently during the assessment.

4 BASELINE CONDITIONS

4.1 Brief Description

The baseline habitats are described within the accompanying PEA and are shown in Appendix A1. There are no irreplaceable habitats present, and no statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations apply.

4.2 Baseline Habitats

Table 2 - Baseline Habitat Area

Line	Habitat Type	Area (ha)	Distinctive ness	Condition	Habitat Units	Retained units
1	Developed sealed surface	0.0051	V. Low	N/A	0	0
2	Artificial unsealed unvegetated	0.0177	V. Low	N/A	0	0
3	Modified grassland	0.0061	Low	Poor	0.1	0.01
4	Tall forb	0.0882	Low	Poor	0.18	0
5	Bramble scrub	0.0290	Medium	N/A	0.12	0
6	Urban tree - Large	0.0733	Medium	Good	0.88	0.44
7	Urban tree - Medium	0.0163	Medium	Good	0.20	0.20
8	Urban tree - Medium	0.0814	Medium	Moderate	0.65	0.52
9	Urban tree - Small	0.0488	Medium	Moderate	0.39	0.06
	Site Area (ha) – excl. trees	0.15			2.42	1.23

Table 3 – On-Site Hedgerow Units

Line	Hedgerow Type	Length (km)	Distinctive ness	Condition	Hedgerow Units	Retained Units
1	Native hedgerow	0.037	Low	Moderate	0.15	0.09
	Hedgerow Length (km)	0.04			1.15	0.09

Table 4 – Baseline Tree Assessment

Refer to the accompanying Habitat Condition Sheet SE2578.4 for additional details and the criteria key. *Rows in red are not retained.*

No.	Species	DBH	Size class	Retain	Native	Canopy	Mature	Adverse	Niches	>20% o/s	Condition
T2	Sycamore	70	Large	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good
T3	Cherry plum	20	Small	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Moderate
T4	Cherry plum	15	Small	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Moderate
T5	Cherry plum	15	Small	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Moderate
T6	Cherry plum	15	Small	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Moderate
T7	Hazel	16	Small	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Moderate
T8	Ash	16	Small	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Moderate
T9	Ash	24	Small	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Moderate
T10	Ash	25	Small	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Moderate
T11	Sycamore	15	Small	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Moderate
T12	Holly	23	Small	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Moderate
T13	Holly (stump)	40	Medium	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Moderate
T14	Hawthorn	53	Medium	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Good
T15	Hawthorn	25.5	Small	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Moderate
T16	Sycamore	61	Large	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Good
T17	Sycamore	39.5	Medium	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Moderate
T18	Cedar	56	Medium	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Moderate
T19	Cedar	37	Medium	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Moderate
T20	Cedar	37	Medium	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Moderate

In summary, the following trees were evaluated (figure in brackets provides the area calculated automatically within the metric):

- **Large Good:** 2 total (0.0733), 1 retained (0.0366)
- **Medium Good:** 1 total (0.0163), 1 retained (0.0163)
- **Medium Moderate:** 5 total (0.0814), 4 retained (0.0651)
- **Small Moderate:** 11 total (0.0488), 2 retained (0.0081)

5 APPLICATION OF THE MITIGATION HIERARCHY

5.1 Background

BNG is a specific, measurable outcome of project activities that deliver demonstrable, quantifiable benefits to biodiversity relative to the baseline situation. These benefits must be achieved through the application of the ‘mitigation hierarchy.’ This approach is included in the National Planning Policy Framework and in ecological best-practice guidelines.

5.2 Application

The surveying and reporting included scoping for statutory and non-statutory sites, protected species and habitats, Habitats and Species of Principal Importance, and irreplaceable habitats. The survey also evaluated the impact of potentially sensitive receptors. On this site, there were no

significant habitats of higher conservation value that required avoidance or specific mitigation. The application of the mitigation hierarchy levels applies as follows:

- Level 1 *Avoidance*: The proposed development takes place on a site which, through neglect, has developed areas of tall forb, bramble and self-sown trees. While this habitat has a limited capacity to support significant biodiversity, it has nevertheless been vegetated in some form for more than 25 years and covers the whole site. It is not practical to redevelop the site without clearing these habitats. The proposed design has therefore focused on retaining as many trees as possible, particularly where these can be incorporated into gardens.
- Level 2 *Minimise*: Retained trees and hedgerows will be protected during the work. Additionally, precautionary working methods and wildlife-friendly lighting will be employed to ensure that reasonable avoidance measures will be enacted to prevent unforeseen harm and disturbance.
- Level 3 *Remediate*: Remediation is not practical within the context of the habitat present.
- Level 4 *Compensate*: Off-site habitat units will be purchased to account for the loss of trees and low-distinctiveness habitats. The proposals will include new native trees along with a significant increase in native hedgerows. Additionally, a proportionate number of new nest and roost boxes are proposed.

6 PROPOSED DESIGN

6.1 Proposed Post-development Scheme

The proposals are illustrated in Appendix A2. The proposals consist of developed land (dwellings and pavings) and a vegetated garden with hedgerows and retained trees. Additionally, there will be a communal area featuring a flowering lawn, native hedgerows, and new trees.

6.2 Proposed Post-development Metric Summary

The area for each proposed habitat type and enhanced habitat is provided in the following tables.

Table 5 - Proposed Habitat Units

Line	Habitat Type	Area (ha)	Distinctiveness	Condition	Habitat Units
1	Developed sealed surface	0.0179	V. Low	N/A	0
2	Artificial unsealed unvegetated	0.0512	V. Low	N/A	0
3	Vegetated Garden	0.0489	Low	N/A	0.09
4	Modified grassland	0.0249	Low	Moderate	0.09
5	Urban tree - Small	0.0204	Medium	Moderate	0.06
	Site Area (ha) – excl. trees	0.14			0.24

Table 6 - Proposed On-Site Hedgerow Units

Line	Hedgerow Type	Length (km)	Distinctiveness	Condition	Hedgerow Units
1	Native hedgerow	0.049	Low	Moderate	0.16
	Hedgerow Length (km)	0.05			0.16

7 BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN METRIC SUMMARY

7.1 Calculator Summary

Due to the loss of established self-set trees, the metric shows a 39% loss of habitat, equating to 0.95 units (Table 7). While hedgerow units delivered a 70% gain, the trading rules for habitat units were not met: 0.95 medium distinctiveness habitats were lost. This is not surprising given the long-term neglect of the site, which allowed vegetated habitats to develop.

This assessment indicates that the development proposal will require 1.19 units to achieve a 10% gain. The required minimum 10% gain will be achieved through the purchase of off-site credit, as there is no opportunity within the scheme to deliver biodiversity net gain.

Table 7: Summary of Habitats from Baseline to Post-development

BNG Category	Unit type	Units	%
On-site Baseline	Habitat units	2.42	
	Hedgerow units	0.15	
On-site post-intervention	Habitat units	1.47	
	Hedgerow units	0.25	
On-site net change	Habitat units	-0.95	-39.29%
	Hedgerow units	0.10	+70.28%
Trading Rules (by distinctiveness group)	Very High	Met	
	High	Met	
	Medium	-0.95	
	Low	0.00	

8 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS

It is anticipated that securing off-site habitat credit will be achieved in response to a planning condition.

APPENDIX A1 Baseline Habitat Plan



APPENDIX A2 Post-development Habitat Plan

